Gone to the Dogs at Naval Hospital Bremerton

Naval Hospital Bremerton/Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Bremerton
Story by Douglas Stutz

Date: 09.19.2023
Posted: 09.19.2023 12:16
News ID: 453772

It's been ruff, but the dogged show of affection was certainly something to howl at Naval Hospital Bremerton for National Dog Week, Sept. 17-23, 2022.

For the second year running, staff have been hounded to provide pooch photos to include in a commemorative canine collection: https://www.flickr.com/photos/navymedicine/albums/72177720311309962

There were working breeds represented, such as German Shepherd Harley belonging to Terry Lerma, NHB emergency preparedness manager, and bloodhounds Ellie Mae, 7-years old and 1-year old MJ, of Amy Salzsieder, Occupational Health registered nurse, all actively involved with the Kitsap County K9 Search and Rescue and National Search Dogs Alliance.

There were other submissions shared who were slightly less active, such as Violet, a 4-year old mixed breed from Motta Sant'Anastasia, Sicily. According to Cmdr. Kevin Johnson, Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command Bremerton Detachment Puget Sound Naval Shipyard interim officer-in-charge, she is quite possibly the laziest dog in the Pacific Northwest, clocking an average daily combined sleep duration of 20 hours. Johnson also notes Violet openly protests walks by laying on her back in the middle of sidewalks or streets.

There were those dogs treasured by their owners for their companionship.

Joshua Sandvig, NHB deputy comptroller and accounting officer introduced us to Cheddar, his 12-year old golden retriever, who is a 'Bama football fan, hiking partner and now nanny for their young son.'

For Carly Farley, NHB Family Medicine Clinic behavioral health care facilitator, her fur family is a trio of rescues. There's Luke, a young German Shepherd.

"He is smart, loyal, strong, fast and has a sense of humor," explained Farley. "He loves sticks and digs deep holes and tunnels. He has a collection of rocks (buckets) that he finds and guards. His dad keeps buying more dirt and filling these holes only for him to dig them up again.

Ella is their middle pooch at 7-years old. "She watches me, loves to seek and find scents," said Farley. "She'll bring me my slippers when I come home from work. She is quite verbal and keeps the young man Luke in check."

Their oldest is Kaia, another rescue who actually found Farley while out walking her dog.

"She used to love playing ball but cannot run any longer. She's about 15 years old, and so loving. She follows me everywhere and loves to be held and talked to," Farley said.

Heather Moran, Navy Medicine Readiness Training Unit Everett registered nurse, insists that her two dogs – each coming from about as divergent a background as imaginable – are truly amazing. Ella is a first generation, 3-year old Labradoodle adopted at 10 weeks from a Nebraska breeder who donates service dogs to veterans. Ella began training at six months and is now a service canine who can also work as a cadaver dog and does explosive ordnance identification. She also works at Naval Station Everett as their Avian Harassment Canine. Charlie is an Australian Shepherd/Staffordshire/Dogo Argentino mix who was found roaming the streets of Everett in 2019. "We adopted him from the Humane Society. He was afraid of everything and had been shot many times. He has

overcome many obstacles like learning to walking on grass, being in the rain and how to play with toys. He is a happy hippo and living his best life," Moran said.

Unfortunately, Chief Hospital Corpsman select Cristi Bussard did not share this year. When she deployed in March 2022 as an Individual Augmentee to the USNS Trenton (EPF 5), working for Commander Task Force 63 in Europe and Africa, their family beagle of 14 years passed on.

Along with the personal connection with canines for many, the U.S. Navy has long had an affinity for dogs. Not only do dogs provide specialized services in the Navy such as explosive and narcotic detachments, they also provide security patrols from the routine to crucial operational missions.

Navy commands from ship to shore to squadron have a long history of including canines as official mascots whom have been considered a viable part of their military unit.

That caring canine connection continues on with many staff at NHB.

One wag and one wet nose at a time.